WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A monitoring device adapted to be connected to a storage area network for monitoring the network, comprising:

a network interface adapted to be connected to the storage area network;

a controller connected to the network interface for controlling the functions of the monitoring device; and

a GPS receiver connected to the controller for supplying a synchronized timing signal to the controller.

2. The monitoring device of claim 1, wherein the controller is a field programmable gate array.

3. The monitoring device of claim 3, further comprising:

a serializer/deserializer connected to the network interface;

a serial router connected to the serializer/deserializer and to the controller;

a peripheral bus interface adapted to be connected to a peripheral bus;

a FIFO connected to the controller and to the peripheral bus interface; and

a timer connected to the controller and receiving the timing signals supplied by the GPS receiver.

4. The monitoring device of claim 3, wherein the network interface is a Fibre Channel interface for connecting to a Fibre Channel, and wherein the peripheral bus interface is a peripheral component interconnect (PCI) interface for connecting to a PCI bus.

5. A storage system comprising:

a storage area network; and

a plurality of monitoring devices connected to the network, each monitoring devices including a GPS receiver for supplying a synchronized timing signal to the receiver, and the plurality of monitoring devices sampling data from the network in a synchronized manner.

6. A method of monitoring a storage area network, comprising:

sampling information from the storage area network using a plurality of monitoring devices;

receiving GPS timing signals by each monitoring device; and

synchronizing the sampling of information by the plurality of monitoring devices using the received GPS timing signals.